



Declaration of Pediatric Cancer as a National Emergency

January 5, 2026

To the Leaders of the United States of America,

Pediatric cancer is a national emergency, and it has been for decades.

Each year, more than 15,000 children in the United States are diagnosed with cancer. Cancer remains the leading cause of disease-related death among children. For many diagnoses, survival rates have stagnated, treatments remain outdated, and families are left navigating a system that was never built with children in mind.

Despite the urgency, pediatric cancer receives less than 5% of federal cancer research funding. Children are still being treated with toxic protocols developed decades ago, resulting in lifelong disabilities, secondary cancers, and preventable deaths. Families are forced to become caregivers, advocates, fundraisers, and medical coordinators, often while enduring financial ruin and emotional trauma. **Each year, thousands of parents and caregivers are forced into an unthinkable role: becoming the ones who must announce their child's death to loved ones and to the world.**

This is not a rare disease crisis. This is not an isolated issue. This is a systemic failure.

When public health emergencies arise, our nation responds with urgency, coordination, and resources. Pediatric cancer has been denied that response, despite its devastating and ongoing impact on children, families, military households, and communities across every state.

The absence of an emergency declaration has not been neutral. It has shaped funding priorities, slowed innovation, fragmented care, and signaled, implicitly but unmistakably, that children with cancer can wait. They cannot. Every year without coordinated national action is a year in which preventable suffering continues, survivorship outcomes stagnate, and lives are lost that should have been saved.

We therefore call on the United States government to formally recognize **pediatric cancer as a national emergency** and to treat it with the same seriousness afforded to other declared crises.

Declaring a national emergency is not symbolic; it is foundational. It acknowledges the scope of harm, validates the lived experiences of families, and establishes the moral and governmental responsibility to act decisively.



Children cannot vote. They cannot lobby. They cannot wait.

This declaration is long overdue. The cost of inaction is measured in children's lives.

Respectfully,

Latanya Morrison
Grandmother of a Superhero
Founder & Executive Director
Ahmad Butler Foundation

On behalf of children with cancer, their families, and advocates nationwide.